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CONGRESSMAN KENDRICK B. MEEK

August 8, 2005

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The Honorable Gérard Latortue, Prime Minister
The Republic of Haïti
Minister Villa D'Accueil Bourdon
Port-au-Prince, Haïti, W.I.

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

I write to voice my serious concerns over the continued detention of the Reverend Gérard Jean-Juste.

It is my understanding that Father Jean-Juste was imprisoned more than a week ago in Port-au-Prince and, despite the fact that he was not formally charged with any crime, he remains incarcerated, well beyond the maximum period of forty-eight hours prescribed under Haitian law.

The imprisonment of Father Jean-Juste is just the latest in a string of highly questionable actions by the Haitian justice system. The trial of Louis Jodel Chamblain, who was tried last year in the middle of the night, was described by the Washington Post as "farcical" and a "sham." An investigation earlier this year by the Organization of American States found that, of the 1,054 inmates at the National Penitentiary, only nine had been convicted of an offense. Finally, former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune remains imprisoned since June of 2004, and was only allowed to appear before a judge after ten months of detention and considerable international pressure.

The unlawful and indefinite confinement of Haitian citizens weakens your government's position in the eyes of the international community and undermines the democratic process and the rule of law. Haiti's respect for the rights of its citizens and, moreover, its adherence to the Haitian Constitution and laws of the Republic, weighs heavily on economic support decisions by businesses and government that are vital to the economic development of Haiti and the welfare of the Haitian people.

Mr. Prime Minister, you have publicly committed yourself to a transparent and accountable government for Haiti. I, therefore, request that your Justice Ministry take the necessary steps to discharge Reverend Jean-Juste, former Prime Minister Yvon Neptune and other Haitian citizens who are currently incarcerated and are eligible for release under Haitian law.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kendrick B. Meek".

KENDRICK B. MEEK
Member of Congress